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CHRISTOPHER ROBINSON, ONE OF THE FIRST
TRUSTEES OF WILLIAM AND MARY COLLEGE.

HIS HOME, "HEWICK ON THE RAPPAHANNOCK."

By MARY POLLARD CLARKE.

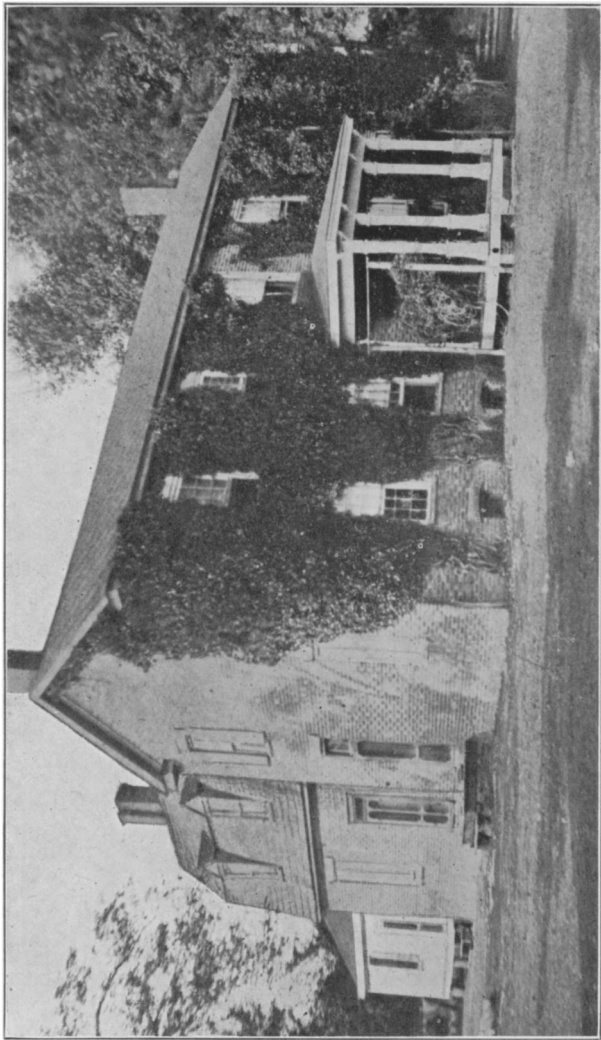
In these days of activity for the promotion of education in Virginia and for the enlargement and increased usefulness of William and Mary College, the oldest in the commonwealth, it may be of interest to inquire who were the pioneers in education, when the colony was young. Who were the first men who thought that the well-being and prosperity of the colony lay in the education of those who came to its shores?

When in 1660, the Colonial Assembly of Virginia ordered that "land be taken upon purchases for a college and free school, and that there be with as much speed as may be convenient, housing erected thereon for the entertainment of students and scholars," the founding of William and Mary College was begun. "They also directed that the Commissioners of the county courts take subscriptions for the benefit of the college, and to send orders to the vestrymen of all parishes to raise money from such inhabitants as had not subscribed to the college"

It is also written that "the Governor and Councilmen of State, and members of the House of Burgesses severally subscribed certain sums of money and quantities of tobacco, to be paid upon demand after a place had been provided and built for educational purposes." It was thus that the pioneers of education in Virginia planned to found a college in 1660. After some delay, due to the unrest which prevailed in the colony, William and Mary College was established in 1693.

It was in this year that Christopher Robinson's name appears as a trustee and a founder of the college. Not only this, but the interests and influence of this man, led him into every field of service to the colony. The facts concerning his career place him among the makers of Virginia's early political history.

He had received every advantage of education, wealth, and family connection, which made his coming to the colony an event



HEWICK (1678), MIDDLESEX COUNTY, HOME OF CHRISTOPHER ROBINSON

of import to affairs of state. We read that he was the elder brother of John Robinson Bishop of London and Plenipotentiary to the Council of Utrecht, and was born at Cleasby, Yorkshire, England in 1645. He came to this country about the year 1660, and settled in Middlesex County. The records of Old Christ Church near Urbanna give his name as vestry man in 1664.

In 1678, according to the record of the State Land Office, one Christopher Robinson acquired 300 acres of land in Middlesex County. It was on this land that he built his home, reared his family, and left a land mark second to none in historic and personal associations. This home is still standing, and the date of its building is imbedded in the corner bricks—though indistinct, one can read 16—. He named it "Hewick." This has been the cherished home place of the Robinsons and their children's children for many generations. Only in the last generation has it been owned and occupied by others. It was built of substantial brick, originally with Dutch roof as the rear part of the house indicates. The front steps were stone, with a colonial doorway and pediment. A modern porch has been ruthlessly added. The trees of this home, tradition says were wonderfully beautiful. A long row of Lombardy poplars, sixty on each side, lined the lane which led to the house. A weeping willow, now alive, but much scarred by age, was planted in the yard by Philip Grymes, who brought the twig from England.

There is so much of romance, politics and interesting personal events connected with this old homestead that one feels that its annals should be recorded for imperishable keeping.

It was here that Christopher Robinson served his state and church. It was here he married and reared a family of children who distinguished themselves in the history of the colony. It was here that his son John Robinson was born, who afterwards became President of the Council. This son married Katharine Beverley, sister of Beverley, the historian. It was here that his son Christopher II was born, who married a daughter of Christopher Wormeley. It was here that Christopher III was born, who married a daughter of Ralph Wormeley of Rosegill. It was here that Judith, daughter of Christopher II, was born, who mar-

ried Carter Braxton, the signer of the Declaration of Independence. It was here at Hewick that the Robinsons, Wormeleys, Beverleys, Braxtons gathered to talk of the colony whose history was being made by themselves.

Above all, its first master was a man of such renown that he received in succession every honor the colony could bestow. The records of Middlesex Court House name him as clerk of the county from 1675 to 1688. Honors of a higher order followed, as he was elected to the House of Burgesses in 1691, and in the same year appointed to the Council. As a further evidence of his efficiency and popularity, the King of England made him Secretary of State of Virginia in 1692.

We might continue this family history and romance by telling of John, a grandson of Christopher I, and son of John of the Council, who became Speaker of the House of Burgesses. His home was Pleasant Hill on the York River, in King and Queen, which county he represented for thirty years from 1736-1766. Campbell in his "History of Virginia," says of him, "Mr. Robinson, amiable, liberal and wealthy, had long been at the head of the aristocracy, and exerted an extraordinary influence on political affairs."

I can not close this sketch of Christopher Robinson and his home without telling of the "inner imperative" which prompted this sketch. In the first place, little has been written of this illustrious Virginian and less of the old home, "Hewick," one of the oldest landmarks in the state; and in the second place memories and associations of my early childhood are connected with this homestead. I lived near it, visited it, and heard the older folks talk concerning it. When a little girl, I remember the visits of William L. Wilson, a college mate of my father's who came a-wooing to "Hewick," for the hand of the lovely daughter of Dr. A. J. Huntington. It was here she summered in the home of her grandfather, Dr. Richard Allen Christian, owner by inheritance of the place. It was here that my father, Dr. John Pollard, united this happy couple in marriage for many years of congenial companionship. Mr. Wilson afterwards became postmaster-general under Grover Cleveland, and later until his death, president of Washington and Lee University.